

unnatural and she insisted upon purchasing a large part of Sylvia's trousseau. She also inquired into the condition of Tom's finances, and when she learned that his home would have to be a very modest one she seemed quite distressed.

"And I have more money than I know what to do with," musingly. "Richard settled \$40,000 on me when we were married, you know."

On the day after her arrival Tom was introduced to her. Sylvia, watching them closely, although she assumed an indifferent manner, felt that her worst fears were confirmed. Within a few minutes after the introduction they were chatting together like old friends.

"Well, I've seen this wonderful Cousin Agatha," said Tom, as they parted, "and she can't hold a candle to you, sweetheart." But Sylvia detected a note of insincerity in his voice and that night she cried herself to sleep.

The next day Cousin Agatha pleaded a headache when Sylvia broached the proposition of a walk. Sylvia had some shopping to do and, after a stroll through the woods alone, returned through the village. Suddenly she stopped dead; she felt as though an icy hand had been laid upon her heart, for at a window on the second story of some business offices she saw Agatha's hat.

There was no mistaking that hat. There could not possibly have been another like it in Stapleton. And the irony of the situation lay in the fact that the hat was nodding at the window of Tom's office.

There were few people in the street and nobody noticed Sylvia clinging, with pale face and trembling limbs, to a corner of the building opposite. She could not tear her eyes away from what she saw. And a moment or two later she saw Agatha's filmy lace handkerchief pressed to her hands and saw Tom's hand patting her cousin's shoulder consolingly.

After awhile Sylvia summoned strength to go home. She did not tell anybody what she had seen. She wrote a little note to Tom that evening.

"I find that I made a mistake," she said. "I thought I loved you, Tom, but I was wrong. Please do not call or write to me and never ask me to explain."

She knew Tom was too proud not to take her at her word. And the next two weeks were miserable ones, for she herself was too proud to let Agatha know how she was suffering.

"Well, I must say I don't think much of that sweetheart of yours, Sylvia," said Agatha. "If I were engaged to a young man I should expect him to come to see me every evening. And here it must be a couple of weeks since he has put in an appearance."

Sylvia did not make the retort that was upon the tip of her tongue: That on four separate occasions she had seen Agatha in Tom's office. And when her mother, looking at her searchingly that night, asked her whether anything was wrong between Tom and herself, she denied it miserably and hurried to her room, that she might give way to her tears without restriction.

But everything draws to a close and the time had come for Agatha to leave. The four trunks were packed, the wonderful hat went into a special box, giving place to a neat traveling hat, and Agatha was waiting for the carriage to come to convey her to the station.

"Sylvia, dear," she said, "there isn't anything wrong between Tom and yourself, is there?"

"N-no," stammered Sylvia brazenly. She would never give her cousin the satisfaction of knowing the harm that she had wrought.

"Because," said Agatha, "I wouldn't have engaged his services if I had reason to believe he was going to be unkind to you."